

# IDENTIFYING THE GOALS and UNDERSTANDING the PURPOSE of CLASSROOM MISBEHAVIOUR



# PURPOSE of MISBEHAVIOUR



- *“The inability of many teachers to cope with the various forms of classroom disturbance is the result of their being unaware of the purpose of such behaviours”*

Rudolf Driekurs

# Guiding Principals for Behaviour Interventions



- Behaviour occurs for a purpose
- The function (purpose) of behaviour is more important than the form (what it looks like)
- Preferred and alternative ways of behaving must be functionally equivalent and effective for the individual
- Recognising the context of behaviour is central to a full understanding of the function of behaviour

# Divisions of Disruptive Behaviour

- Tension-Reduction  
Disruptive Behaviour:

-Motive of the disruptive behaviour is to reduce emotional tension.

-Goals: to relieve frustration, anxiety, boredom, fear, excitement

E.g. Environmental conditions; response to peer pressure; bullying; rejection; subject matter; teaching method; teacher response/reaction

- Need-Satisfaction  
Disruptive Behaviour:

-Motive of disruptive behaviour: to satisfy a personal need.

-Goals: to attain attention, power, revenge, non-involvement

# What are the GOALS of Misbehaviour?



- *“All unsatisfactory behaviour in the classroom or school whether social, intellectual or emotional is directed towards one of four possible goals”  
Dreikurs*

1. ATTENTION SEEKING
2. DEMONSTRATING POWER
3. SEEKING REVENGE
4. ESCAPING BY WITHDRAWAL

# To know the purpose of a student's misbehaviour, teachers must examine their own spontaneous and impulsive reactions and feelings



- Attention

- Power

- Revenge

An act of defiance may involve elements of POWER & REVENGE

- Withdrawal

- Teacher feels themselves becoming impatient and annoyed

- Teacher feels provoked, angered or personally challenged

- Teacher feels deeply hurt and wonders how a student can be so vindictive. It is the **personal** nature of the hurt which distinguishes revenge

- Teacher feels they have tried everything and discouraged

# ATTENTION SEEKING



- Most common form of misbehaviour (70%)
- Consumes an inordinate amount of unproductive time
- Wide range of attention seeking behaviours



# Forms of Attention Seeking Behaviour



- **Attacking Behaviour** - student actively provokes or annoys a teacher in a way that is difficult to ignore
- **Defending Behaviour** – student remains passive by involving the teacher unnecessarily, or by pleasantly defending against the demands of the classroom



What did you do at the weekend?



## Student's goal: Attention seeking

Attacking behaviour		Defending behaviour	
Student's strategy	How teacher feels and reacts	Student's strategy	How teacher feels and reacts
Is a nuisance	Annoyed and	Lazy	'I must do something'
The show-off	irritated	Wants help	
The clown	'For goodness	Bashful, shy	Sense of
The smart	sake, stop it'	Fearful	responsibility
alec	Feeling of relief	Too tired	Urge or coax
The walking	when the	Untidiness	into action
question mark	annoying	Self-indulgent	Feeling of
Mischief maker	behaviour ceases	Vain	encouragement
Pushing,		Cute	when student
obtrusive		Model child	responds
Latecomer		Speech	In the case of
Instability		impediment	'model' child,
Embarrassing		Anxious	flattered by child's
behaviour		Frivolous	conformity
Pencil tapper			
The talker			

# How Do I Respond to Attention Seekers?



- Use ‘tactical ignoring’ for low-level attention seeking
- Use the ‘quiet-aside’ to discuss the goal
- ‘Catch them being good’, provide positive attention when they’re on task
- Make a plan or contract that involves the recognition (from parent, class, principal or parent) as a reward
- Use class meetings to discuss ‘Why some people like to interrupt or disturb classes’.
- Use logical consequences



# Power



- Demonstrated by disobedience, stubbornness, dawdling, temper tantrum, defiance and argumentativeness
- May be either attacking or defending e.g.. “You can’t stop me” or “You can’t make me”
- Power is important only when it is contested. A student who is unable to involve a teacher in a power struggle is not reinforced for the behaviour



## Student's goal: Power

Attacking behaviour		Defending behaviour	
Student's strategy	How teacher feels and reacts	Student's strategy	How teacher feels and reacts
Rebellious	Feels threatened	Stubborn	Feels exasperated
Argues	Feels angry	Unco-operative	Feels irritated
Defiant	Feels authority is being challenged	Dawdles	Feels challenged
Truant	Wants to get on top	Forgetful	Feels frustrated
Contradicts	'If you think I'm going to stand for this, you're mistaken'	Disobedient (refuses to do what he is told)	'You won't get out of it this way'
Disobedient (carries out forbidden acts)	'I'll teach you to defy me'		'You'll fall into line or else'
Temper tantrums	'You won't get away with this'		Feels victorious when student falls into line
Bully			
'Boss'	Feels victorious when behaviour is quelled		

# How Do I Respond to Power Struggles?



## **Disengage from the power struggle**

- remain outwardly calm
- re-direct to task / rule / expectation
- use a brief stress-reduction technique e.g. Take a deep breath & let it out slowly
- respond in a neutral, business like calm voice
- keep responses brief (use the 'rule of five')
- avoid reacting in a confrontational manner

# How Do I Respond to Power Struggles?



## Consider ‘Interrupting Tactics’

- divert the student’s attention with an alternative activity
- send him/her on an errand / drink
- provide a calm-down or cool off area
- engage in ‘active listening’ and paraphrase essential points of the students concerns. Eg *”let me be sure that I understand ....”*
- ask open ended questions (*what, who, when, where, how*) to better understand the problem

NB. Avoid *why* questions. They may not know and it implies blame

# How Do I Respond to Power Struggles?



## Use ‘De-escalating Tactics’ to anger and perceived threats

- replace negative words in teacher requests with positives e.g.  
*“If you don’t return to your seat, I won’t help you” (-ve phrasing)* change to  
*“I can give you some help just as soon as you return to your seat”*
- use non-verbal techniques to defuse confrontation.  
eg. rather than stand over an agitated student, sit down at a desk next to them
- provide legitimate choices and ‘take-up time’
- state the +ve consequence for following a direction
- offer the student a face-saving path out of a potential conflict. e.g. *“Is there anything we can work out to earn your co-operation”*

# How Do I Respond to Power Struggles?



- use humour NOT sarcasm
- label the emotion that the student appears to convey.  
eg “*Tyrone you seem angry. Can you tell me what’s wrong?*”
- restructure the activity or modify the task
- use the ‘quiet aside’, logical consequences may not work without a discussion on responsibilities
- look for opportunities to encourage co-operation



# REVENGE



- When students feel that they are unfairly treated by teachers and school their goal may be to get even
- Forms of Revenge Seeking behaviour include:

**attacking behaviour-** *stealing, violence, brutality, destruction, cruelty*

**defending behaviour-** *being sullen, morose, moody or exhibit attitudes which you interpret as indicating violence or hatred*





# REVENGE



- Students have given up hope of belonging, their only way of attaining a social position is by being disliked
- Our principal objective is to convince them that they can be liked and accepted
- Punishment invites retaliation. Teachers must look for ways to provide successful and meaningful experiences to counter their –ve self concept sense of worthlessness
- Revenge is best dealt within the group. If others can show acceptance there is no point continuing to get even

## Student's goal: Revenge

Attacking behaviour		Defending behaviour	
Student's strategy	How teacher feels and reacts	Student's strategy	How teacher feels and reacts
Vicious 'Tough guy' Cruelty Brutal Stealing Destruction Vandalism	Feels badly upset Feels deeply hurt Feels measure of trepidation 'What will he do next?' 'What have I done to deserve this?' 'How could he do this to me?' 'What an ungrateful person!' 'Must be punished' Feeling of immense relief and hope at any sign of improvement	Sullen Moody Morose Refuses to participate	Feeling of injustice Feels that child is ungrateful 'Well, two can play this game.' 'This won't get you anywhere.' 'It's not my job to placate or appraise you.' 'You can make the first move.' Feeling of self-justification if child displays acceptable behaviour

# How Do I Respond to Revenge?



- Don't retaliate
- Disclose the goal
- Discuss the times the student provokes others
- Talk about the good qualities he/she can use to help others like him/her



# Escape By Withdrawal



- The student seeks to safeguard prestige by an assumed or real deficiency
- Characterised by a lack of activity and submissive attitude
- Sole purpose is to avoid further hurt, humiliation or frustration
- Students impress teachers with low levels of ability so little is expected of them



# Withdrawal



- Escape may be partial or complete
- Play stupid – when asked to complete a difficult task or situations which make them feel inadequate – this excuses their inability to cope
- Criticism and revenge contribute to the problem by heightening their negative self concept
- No attacking forms of this goal – purpose is to be left alone and have nothing expected of them
- They need positive reassurance by teachers of their worth and ability

## Student's goal: Escape by withdrawal

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### Defending behaviour

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Student's strategy	How teacher feels and reacts
Stupidity	Feeling of inferiority
Idleness	Feeling of helplessness
Indolence	Feeling of despair
Incapable	'I just don't know what more I can do.'
Inferiority	'I am at my wit's end.'
Won't mix	'I give up.'
Solitary activities	'What can I do with him?'
Fantasy activities	Instances of improved behaviour are seized upon hopefully. (Perhaps he's a late developer.)
Babyish ways	
'Hopeless'	Expect nothing of student.

# How Do I Respond to Escape By Withdrawal?



- Disclose the goal
- Find activities in which the student can succeed and gradually increase the difficulty
- Help the student realise that, without trying and maybe failing, they will never know their true potential



# REMEMBER



**ANALYSE WHAT YOU FIRST FEEL LIKE DOING  
AND  
CONSIDER DOING THE EXACT OPPOSITE**

The student's behaviour is not usually aimed at you as an individual, but rather at the system or the world

THE BEHAVIOUR IS AN ATTEMPT TO BELONG AND FIND SELF  
WORTH